Seasonal Activities

128 A chart has been prepared to show the climatic conditions in Bang Chan and what people were doing at different seasons (Chart 1). For convenience, the periods covered by the four rounds of the dietary survey (p. 58) are included.

22] The year starts with May, the beginning of the rice-
132 year. At this time the rains began to soften the parched
241 ground, and the heat slackened. School re-opened. Farmers
512 turned to plowing, harrowing, raising the seedlings. Both
871 sexes worked about equally in field labor, boys from 14 and
668 girls from about 15 years of age performing tasks according
883 to skill and strength. Everyone was in the field at dawn. The buffalo, but not the farmer, rested through the noonday heat (about 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.) and also on the weekly holy
264 day. Meals were usually eaten about 10 a.m. and after returning from the field at dark. Although two meals a day were usual at other times, at this season, some had a third
[262] meal about 2 p.m. If the buffalo were brought home to rest, this meal could be eaten at home, but hired laborers or those working far from home often took with them rice and other foods in a (2)pin-(1)too, or tiered lunch kit.

221 With the rains, the canals had filled, so that by June
132 buyers with big rice boats could return. The few farmers who
501 could afford to hold onto a portion of their last year's crop
443 sold it for a better price at this time. Vegetables and
24] fruits which had died in the long drought were replaced, and trees were planted.

24 In July the heavy transplanting season began. Because
221 of cooperative work habits or hiring out, people worked
132 solidly day after day for two months on their own or on another's fields. It was dawn-to-dark, back-breaking work.

This was an anxious time. The seedlings had to go in at exactly the right time. Water level was only partly con-
[512] trollable. Lack of rain might be remedied by pumping water
871 from the canals but flooding would drown the plants. School
857 vacation was scheduled at this time so both teachers and children could help. Older children might work in the fields,
883 while younger ones, from 8 to 13, and the aged took over the care of babies and toddlers, fished, cooked, gathered food
[433] for the family and grass for the buffalo. People knew the crop was subject to drought and flood, pests of rats and worms, destruction by birds or wandering buffalo or duck, and in the end to the mysterious fluctuations of the price of rice on the world market. Moreover, some persons worried about debts, acquired from giving a ceremony or making a capital investment and sometimes from heavy gambling during the rest season.

221 Despite the availability of fish and of vegetables in
435 the canal, the highest cash outlays for family food occurred in this transplanting season. Several factors probably contributed to this: increased food energy needs because of long hours of work, venders again accessible because of high water, cash from sale of last year's crop still in hand, the convenience of cooked foods and snacks, and perhaps the need to replenish household supplies after the long drought, or after their depletion by a ceremony.

221 The two months of September and October during which
[512] the rice grew afforded some respite. People slept a little longer and breakfast was not prepared so early. The skilled cook might take over and could give more attention to food preparation. All who could, took the opportunity to visit
[illegible] and take trips. A few might go on a pilgrimage. Therefore,
264 in this season, all family members were less often together
226 at the evening meal. Fishing was a continuous occupation,
[illegible] with some preserving and home craft. Jobs such as selling
[illegible] food in the market were undertaken for ready cash; houses and
[illegible] equipment were built or repaired. Finally the threshing floor was prepared.

[342] High water caused time-consuming inconvenience only in
[331] earth-floored cottages where it was necessary to keep the rice stores and chickens dry, move the cook-stove, and either build plank walks or cook standing ankle deep in water.

243 By November, the earliest varieties of rice matured.
221 Those who owned several rice fields could put at least one into an early type. Many persons, by then short of rice, were glad to be thus tided over. One grandmother divided her first harvest among her several long-since-independent married children; 2 tangs[1] of milled rice per family, 40 for herself.

The heroic labor of harvest occupied December, January, and February. Farmers raced against the all-too-fast lowering of the water in the canals, without which sheaves could
[461] not be moved and buyers could not come for the paddy. People worked all daylight hours in the fields, threshed far into
[226] the night. At this time also many varieties of fish matured and men fished night after night. Just when the convenience
434 of purchased food was greatest, cash was exhausted. With
426 rice money in sight, venders might be generous with credit,
443 but they could navigate only the larger canals, so were not available to many.

000 There was an important psychological difference between

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[504] 1. One tang equals 20 liters. Milled rice weighs about 16 kg. per tang.

For items used less frequently, the figures are correspondingly less than the usual amount eaten. Thus, sweet potato, which is represented as 18 grams per day per person in Group A, actually appeared on 3 records only. One family of 8 persons ate 1200 grams of sweet potato at one meal and a substantial amount later the same day. Most items appear on the lists for both groups, but sweet potato, sweet basil and bananas were included on the list for Group A only, and glutinous rice which is used as a sweet in this area, appears on the list for Group B only. Note that a few common foods account for most of the nutrients in the diets of both groups. These common foods account for only about 80% of the calcium and vitamin A value and slightly less of the ascorbic acid in the diets of Group A. The list for Group B accounts for about 70% of the calcium and 60% of the ascorbic acid in the diets of this group. The variety of green leaves used once or twice only on survey days by Group B, and the number of different seasonal fruits used by both groups in small amounts as snacks, probably account for this.

Contribution of Snacks to the Nutrient Content of Diets. - On the average, 4 out of 5 children had one snack per day, whereas only one adult in 6 did so. The following items appeared most commonly: various kinds of fruit, 40 times (orange 7, banana 6, pineapple, watermelon and mango each 5 times, guava, jujube and Manila tamarind each 2 times, olives, rambutan, rambai, star gooseberry, (2)ta-(1)koo and Thai nutmeg each once,) coconut and bread each 13 times, glutinous rice 8, mung bean 7, truffles 6, products made of rice flour 6 times, and a variety of other items including rice noodles, sweet potato, taro, bean sprouts, lotus stalks, lotus seeds, popcorn, products made of cassava flour, sugar cane, pork and milk from 1 to 4 times each. Salt, and/or palm sugar were eaten with a number of the snacks. Although they contributed only about 2% of the total calories, and from 1 to 3% of most nutrients, snacks contributed 16% of the total ascorbic acid for Group A and 11% for Group B.

Seasonal Variation in Food Preparation, Meal Patterns, Food Costs and Calorie and Nutrient Value of Foods Eaten

In Table 14, a summary including the number of meals prepared, time spent in meal preparation, number of "with-rice" dishes, and cash expenditures for food is given by rounds, for families in each group.

Number of Meals Prepared. - Food was cooked twice on each survey day in 3 of 6 households in Group A and 3 of 5 households in Group B. Heavy farm work or vending which kept the mother away from the house sometimes accounted for once-a-day food preparation. One housewife who took food to market in Bangkok, cooked food twice a day only during the period shortly before the birth of a child, when she was not vending.

[Text continues on page 79 --- Analysis]

Another, who had time during Round IV to prepare food twice a day, preferred to prepare more in the morning when she expected to offer food to her son who had just been ordained. In two instances an evening meal was not prepared because the father and mother had been invited to a feast in connection with an ordination ceremony, on one occasion a mother did not prepare food because she was gambling. In all of these cases, the evening meal at home consisted of leftover rice and other foods prepared earlier. The housewife in Household 215 sometimes received cooked foods from visitors in return for her services as medium, and these were used, together with leftover foods, for the evening meal. The meal patterns of the two groups of families did not appear to differ greatly.

Time for Meal Preparation and Number of Dishes Prepared. - In general, the time for meal preparation varied with the number and type of "with-rice" dishes prepared. The "hot" dishes usually required more preparation time than the mild ones, because of the time required to pound spices, and to cut up ingredients. Once-a-day food preparation reduced the time required for cooking. More time was apt to be spent on food preparation when the housewife was least busy with farm work or other work outside the home. Some of the families visited early in Round I had not begun heavy farm work, and in some, children, who were less skilled, did the cooking.

Cost of Food Purchased. - The lowest cash expenditure for food by any household on a survey day was 0.12 baht, for a family in Group A, and the highest 16.24 bahts, for a household in Group B (Table 14, p. 78). On a per capita basis, however, the mean cash expenditure for food by Group A households, for all survey days, was slightly higher than for households in Group B (Table 8, p. 62), and no evidence was obtained that in general households in one group tended to spend more for food than households in the other. Despite the wide variation in cash expenditures for food on the survey days, the tendency for cash expenditures for food to decrease in both groups of households as the survey year progressed was apparent. Most of the rice was sold at the end of Round III. The cash went for capital investments, not food, during Round IV. With time to drain ponds and to fish intensively, and with ceremonies to attend, people did not need to buy fish and meat which were relatively expensive.

Calorie and Nutrient Value of Foods Eaten. - The seasonal variation in calorie and nutrient intake of the two groups of families is shown in Table 15. As one would expect, the average calorie intake was higher during Rounds I and III, when relatively heavy farm work associated with planting and harvesting was under way, than during Round II, which was primarily the growing season for rice, or Round IV, when the harvest was in, and the earth was dry so that preparation for the next planting had not yet begun. Greater consumption of rice in Rounds I and III was largely responsible for the

[Text continues on page 81 --- Analyst]

APPENDIX A

Description of the Kitchen and Some Notes on Food Preparation in a Relatively Prosperous Household[1]

Friday, May 22, 1953

Arrived at 5:15 a.m. When we reached the house, the mother was holding the dog. The house was dark, and we walked around sleeping babies and children. . . . . The 15 year old niece who prepares meals here, was already at work. For light she had an oil lamp, a tin of about 1 pt. capacity, with wick. The rice was already measured, but she waited until SS could weigh it, before putting it on to cook. SS used her flashlight to see the scale and her notebook.

The kitchen here has a thatched roof, well smoked, but the walls and "windows" are of woven split bamboo. A sliding wooden "window" can be pushed back to allow access to a broad shelf outside. Here a large pan of pond water is kept, so that dishes may be rinsed and hands rinsed after each operation. Dishes are stacked upside down, on a wooden rack nearby, to dry.

The stove area in the corner has place for one fire, but several places for pots to stand. Downstairs, under the shed near the fish pond, is a larger clay stove, where the niece cooks the rice in the morning (enough for noon as well) and some other items; for example the (3)khii-(2)leg leaves which were cooked last night for use in sour curry this a.m. This probably keeps the kitchen cooler than it would otherwise be. Waste, fish bones, vegetable parings, etc., which are to be given to the chickens, can be thrown below through the space between two floor levels (kitchen and main rooms).

Rice water, coconut water, and food left in the serving bowls when the meal is over, are given to the dogs. A bowl is kept below, near where rice is drained, for dog food. Food left in pots is kept for humans to eat.

Fish caught in the pond are kept alive in pond water, in a water jar. When a fish is wanted, the niece catches one from the jar, stuns it with the back of her knife, and scales and cleans it on a split log nearby (rounded side of log up). The fish is put into a small basket, and the niece

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1. In reproducing these notes, slight changes have been made such as substitution of descriptive terms for personal names which appeared in the original.